



West Midlands Branch eNews

Issue 10 – July 2015

Readers who received eNews by e-mail also received the following attachments

- Railfuture response to Wales Route Study (draft)
- Railfuture's Rail User Express bulletin, June 2015 and July 2015 issues
- West Coast Rail 250 report – June 2015
- Railfuture's Yorkshire Rail Campaigner - June 2015
- West Midlands Rail Devolution
- Midland Metro Passenger Satisfaction
- Rail Passenger Satisfaction

We welcome contributions from branch members, other Railfuture members, or the public, with any interesting news or pictures. So if you've learnt about something the West Midlands rail scene, or if you've been on an interesting/unusual journey, let us know and we'll include whatever we can.

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WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH MATTERS

Membership

There are more than 220 members in the West Midlands branch (which includes Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire Worcestershire and Warwickshire as well as the West Midlands). Have you asked your friends to join Railfuture yet? If we all could get just one new member each then, across the whole country, we could strengthen Railfuture's campaigning (even better if we can get some younger new members with good technical, design and communications skills).

National Conference Autumn 2016

A date for your 2016 diary. On November 12th 2016 Railfuture West Midlands will be hosting Railfuture's national autumn conference. It will be held in the Priority Rooms, Bull Street, Birmingham. The main meeting room there is a square shape with a platform for speakers and installed microphones. There is also a decent break out area in the foyer. Facilities for disabled are excellent. By then the Midland Metro tram will stop outside!

The conference theme is to be 'The Role of Railways in Developing the Local Economy'. We're now on the hunt for high-profile speakers from national and local government and business, from academia, and of course the railway world. More details as they become available.

LOCAL CAMPAIGNS

We have been mulling over a wide variety of possible railway developments in the West Midlands and have come up with a fairly extensive wish-list (see below). Most of these are ones that have been identified before – by Centro, by local authorities and by various railway pundits. The challenge now is to pick those that would give the best value-for-money and which our meagre in-house resources can sustain. Can you help us with this? Do you have personal contact with your local or national politicians or journalists, or with local town/city hall officers involved with transport?

Our wish list is still being developed and refined, so we'll share this with you when it's in a more complete form. Do you have any pet projects that we may not have included? (Be realistic. We're not going to get the line through Cleobury Mortimer re-opened this century!)

Cotswold Line Promotion Group AGM - May 2015.

More than 75 CLPG members attended their AGM to receive the annual reports and election of officers.

The meeting then had a presentation from Steven Fisher, Head of London Midland Trains' Regional Services, who covers the Birmingham–Worcester–Hereford Route. He outlined the Direct Award process, current performance and the Malvern Link and Bromsgrove station builds.

Interestingly the installation of the Henwick Road turn-back, which is on the west bank of the Severn River in Worcester, to allow the Great Western new IEPs to no longer to have to run to Great Malvern before running east to Worcester would free up these paths for London Midland to offer additional through services to Great Malvern. Work on the turnback starts this year and will be completed late 2016.

CLPG would support extension of the Network Rail Electrification study for Derby – Birmingham-Bristol to include electrification to Worcester from the Bromsgrove electrification.

Chairman of the Gloucester and Warwickshire Railway explained the costs of either expanding their line beyond Broadway five miles towards Evesham/Honeybourne or relieving pressure on Cheltenham Racecourse Station by extending a mile and a half to Cheltenham. The former would require acquisition of the track bed and the rebuilding of ten Victorian road bridges over the track bed costing tens of millions of pounds. The extension to Cheltenham is cheaper as the G&W own the track bed and is the one currently preferred by G&W members.

Mark Hopwood, Managing Director of First Great Western, gave a presentation on their Direct Award and their new rolling stock. IEPs will provide 580 seats compared with HSTs 504 seats and they have ordered Class 387 EMUs not the Class 319s rumoured. All the trains will be rebranded GWR in white letters on green painted rolling stock. Doors will be driver controlled on all the new rolling stock with train managers retained for revenue protection and customer service. The IEP bi-modes used on the Cotswold line will be five-car units in off peak and ten-car (two five-car units connected together) at peak times. As the five-car units are self-contained there will be a train manager/host in each five car set for safety and customer service.

Stratford- Honeybourne route reopening is supported by Great Western and Cala Homes who are seeking to develop homes at Long Marston having provided £500k towards the GRIP study and the Department for Transport have quoted £200 million for the reopening which includes the usual Whitehall +66% contingency addition to the costs. It is believed that the housing developers are willing to contribute £70 million.

Great Western are committed to reducing journey times to Paddington from Worcester to two hours eight minutes with further timetable changes in December 2015 but a wholesale reduction will only come with the use of IEPs who are faster accelerating than the current HST stock.

Despite much publicity in the press of changes to the terms and conditions of travel so that Peak and Off-Peak hours are common across the Great Western Franchise one train a day to Paddington and one evening train to Hereford from Paddington are affected. The introduction of advanced fares in peak time which have not been available on the Cotswold Line before seems to have assuaged the attendees as no-one offered any comment or resistance to the change other than a last minute comment by the CLPG Chairman as the meeting broke up.

CONSULTATIONS

Cotswold Line News

A few highlights from the final results of Worcestershire CC public consultation on the Worcester Parkway. There were four road shows held in Worcester, Kidderminster, Malvern and Pershore and nine staffed exhibition locations.

10,000 feedback leaflets were distributed to key locations and was the main feedback method used to gather views in conjunction with the material that was produced for the exhibitions. This leaflet was distributed to: - All railway stations in South Worcestershire; Worcestershire libraries; Worcestershire Parishes; District Council offices; Tourist Information Centre; Schools.

Significant findings

Potential users:

- 73% of non-rail users would use Worcestershire Parkway and 61% of rail users would use it as an alternative to their existing station.
- This figure rises to 87% for users of Birmingham International and 72% for Warwick Parkway.
- Albeit that daily users would be less likely to use the new station (43%).
- 82% of respondents would consider travelling from the proposed new station for some or all of their journeys currently being undertaken by car.

Station facilities

Participants rated travel information screens, toilets and shelters as very important and as lowest retail facilities and electric car charging points. These preferences might well apply to other non-urban stations. It is of interest that staffed ticket office was rated higher than ticket machines albeit marginally.

LETTERS

RAILFUTURE'S CAMPAIGNING – WORKING WITH AND LEARNING FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

An explanation of how Railfuture intends to move forward with its campaigning was described by Jerry Alderson - Director of Finance and Corporate Governance.

Railfuture is expanding its international campaigning, quite massively if everything goes to plan. This is as a result of Ian Brown CBE joining the Railfuture Board in May 2014 as its Director of Policy. He brings a huge amount of experience of working in international railways, and is a huge coup for us (as is Stewart Palmer, ex-MD of South West Trains also joined as a director in May 2015.)

Rather than operating in a silo, in future Railfuture's international rail campaigning will be fully integrated with our other campaigning. This means that knowledge of international rail matters will be used to full effect to campaign for a better railway in Britain, which is what all Railfuture members want. This change, which will benefit the volunteers who are involved in international rail matters, is a great opportunity and one that the Board gave a lot of consideration to. Rather than looking solely at European mainland matters Railfuture will look at best practice throughout the world. In everything Railfuture does the question "what do they do in other countries" will be asked, and will influence the campaigning for a better and better railway in Britain.

"You're my new best friend! What David Cameron told Worcestershire's new MP"

From Worcester News 11th June 2015 (courtesy of Colin Major)

DAVID Cameron has called a Worcestershire MP his "new best friend" - as the PM vowed to help secure the county faster, better train services.

Nigel Huddleston enjoyed a barnstorming debut at Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the Commons today, championing the county's rapidly growing economy and putting pressure on the Government to improve the railways. During their debate, which was viewed around the world, the premier admitted "further investment between Worcester and Oxford really is necessary".

Mr Huddleston used the session to mention data which revealed Worcestershire has the third fastest growing economy in England, behind only London and Oxfordshire, The Conservative, who represents Mid-Worcestershire, then told Mr Cameron a redoubling of the Cotswold railway line would help hugely.

Speaking at PMQs today (11th June) Mr Cameron said: "He has got off to a tremendous start - mentioning the railway line that goes straight through the middle of my constituency, which I want to see the further redoubling." So he is already my new best friend. We have already got the intercity express trains planned to operate between London and Worcester from 2017.

"There will be new and updated trains for every part of the Great Western Franchise. But he is right, further investment in redoubling the railway between Oxford and Worcester really is necessary to deliver the extra services and the more reliable services that both his constituents and my constituents would like."

Mr Huddleston said: "I couldn't have been happier with the Prime Minister's response. It is clear that further redoubling is necessary and it is great that the Prime Minister backs this investment work. Of course, redoubling is a big investment, but I will continue to make the case that it is necessary for the county to continue to grow and lobby ministers and network rail to commit to this work. But to have the Prime Minister onside already is a big win. My PMQs was a great opportunity to promote the incredible economic performance of Worcestershire and I will continue to champion Worcestershire in parliament over coming years."

OUT-OF-AREA NEWS (but of interest to West Midlands)

(The following was composed before the news of major changes to Network Rail's five-year plan. Railfuture East Anglia and Thames Valley branch members are assessing the impact of that on Oxford to Cambridge and there will be more news in the near future)

There has been steady progress on the Western Section of the project, recently Oxford City Council gave approval for the rebuilding of the line in north Oxford. For more detail see www.railfuture.org.uk/ox-cam.

On 8th June 2015 the chairmen of Railfuture Thames Valley and Railfuture East Anglia with two others from their committees visited Network Rail in Milton Keynes for a project update. And here is their report:

Vegetation clearance, environmental impact assessment, and geo-tech surveys are progressing well. Structural surveys (bridges etc) are due to start soon.

The Transport & Works Act Order application is on schedule for submission in May 2016. There will be a single application to cover the project from slightly east of Bicester to Bedford, and Princes Risborough to Claydon. The application will be completely separate from the hybrid bill for HS2; both are on a stand-alone basis. Full approval of the TWAO is expected by Nov 2017. There may be some scope for early work, for example crossing upgrades, using permitted development. A full consultation programme will start in September.

In the Bicester area, agreements have now been reached with the planning authority and local landowners on access routes and noise reduction measures. Several options for the major road crossings in the area are being evaluated with the highway authority. Bicester town centre will not be in the TWAO application, but dealt with separately.

At Winslow, new school and housing developments are being planned near the new station.

Between Aylesbury and Claydon junction, a double track line, rather than single, is being considered and a conclusion on this is expected soon.

The public consultations on crossings have generally gone well. Crossing options at Swanbourne and Woburn Sands and Lidlington are still under development.

The construction plan will involve access roads on at least one side of the line for the whole length of the route to minimise the use of local roads by construction traffic.

Network Rail are planning to install the electrification infrastructure by 2019, but it may not be operational for the start of services.

We are still waiting for news of the eastern part of the project Bedford to Cambridge and East Anglia. This will be publicised when it becomes available.

Railfuture WM Committee member Cllr Phil Davis, who appeared on BBC Midlands Today to give a personal view on the deal, said: 'I've travelled on perfectly comfortable Pendolinos on the Italian railway but the British variety has sacrificed comfort to packing in the paying customer. This is a typical distortion in our rail funding ."

The next Railfuture West Midlands eNews will be issue 11 in September 2015.

Other issues of *Railfuture* West Midlands eNews are available at
www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/?branch=West+Midlands

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